

of affairs without. They saw it was only left to them to decide a war that public sentiment had already declared. Necessity demanded an ally, and wistful eyes were cast towards England historic foe. An agent of France was in Philadelphia charged with the mission of offering the good services of his government to the colonies. Congress deputed Jay, Franklin and Jefferson as a committee to confer with the envoy. The conference successful, and was the first in a chain of events that led to French alliance and to Jefferson's diplomatic career in France.

Jefferson remained in Congress for three months serving numerous committees and taking an active part in all proceedings. In December he left Philadelphia for Monticello. During this absence from Congress Jefferson's mother died, and generally thought that it was her illness that called him away from his post of duty. In May, 1776, he returned to Philadelphia and entered energetically into the work of Congress, found all things tending to revolution. On the day of his return Congress passed resolutions advising the colonies to form governments for themselves; five days after his return news came that the Virginia Convention had passed a resolution instructing its delegates in Congress to support a motion declaring "United Colonies free and independent States, absolved from allegiance or dependence upon the Crown or Parliament Great Britain." This resolution was reported by Archibald Cary, a kinsman of Jefferson and the man who reported for the reply to the "Conciliatory Proposition" of Lord North. This circumstance, and the additional fact that Jefferson in Virginia, and probably at the capital at the time of the passage of the resolution, have been used as the basis of a conjecture that he had a hand in the drafting and passing of most important act of the Convention. If it should ever be proved that Jefferson was the author of that resolution, it will be no occasion for surprise, for it was his custom never to appear himself in a legislative measure when he could get someone else to appear for him.

Congress promptly took up the question presented to it by the Virginia resolution. On June 7th R. H. Lee moved